

TESTIMONY by RENA SCHINE ON H.B. 6501

My name is Rena Schine. I am a School Psychologist and Education Advocate for CACLD.

I represented CACLD on the SRBI Advisory Panel of 2006-07 and am writing to testify that many of us on that panel did not agree with the idea that a student should go through a long process (20-40 weeks) of SRBI before being evaluated to determine if the child is a child with a disability. I and many others on the committee and in the community believe that informed intervention needs to be prompt and should be based on hard psychological data about the strengths and weaknesses of a given child's learning and processing style.

A 20-40 week intervention under SRBI may give information about how a child does on specific skills, but it does not address the generalized often hidden learning problems that might be the underlying cause of the child's struggling. It is important to identify the factors that get in the way of the child's ability to problem solve and learn in order for an appropriate program to be designed in a timely fashion to support the whole child.

The three tier paradigm was not intended to be another rigid arbitrary prescribed formula like the Discrepancy Model which involved a formula to identify significant discrepancy between the Composite IQ and Achievement test scores of a student. This approach to diagnosing learning disabilities was rightfully criticized for many reasons (e.g. it was based on misleading composite scores that masked the at-risk indicators, was seen as a wait and fail approach, implementation was inconsistent, and it failed to differentiate low achievement from specific learning disabilities. We must be wary of getting stuck once again fitting human behavior into a mathematical equation that will delay provision of an appropriate targeted service.

The introduction of RTI/SRBI into the *identification* for special education process has caused confusion for districts in understating when to provide interventions, for how long and when a referral for special education evaluation is warranted, often blurring the lines between the general education classroom interventions and special education services. Each has its place in providing the students an opportunity to receive instruction based on their needs but first the needs need to be identified and diagnosed in a comprehensive manner through a standardized evaluation not through a 20-40 week process of trial and error.

Melody Musgrove, Director Office of Special Education United States Department of Education sent out a directive on 1/21/1 clearly stating that RTI cannot be used to delay/deny an evaluation and warned that this practice was inconsistent with IDEA; the CT State Advisory Council on Special Education (SAC) is also concerned about that practice; and the CT State Department of Education acknowledges that SRBI should not delay any referral to special education and yet I often hear PPT members claim that an SRBI sequence is "required" in all cases before a child can be determined eligible for services. It seems that the "2010 Guidelines" contradicts itself and leaves room for misunderstanding. That is why I respectfully urge you to pass the Bill HB 6501 which is intended to prevent delays in the evaluation process of children suspected of having a learning disability and therefore in need of special education.

Respectfully yours,
Rena Schine, Ph.D.
School Psychologist/Advocate
CACLD